



Marine Resources

Minutes

April 5, 2006

4:00 – 6:12 pm, Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair Phyllis Kind, Hi Bronson, Tom Campbell, Joe Hillers, Don Meehan, Rolf Seitle, Dick Toft, Ken Urstad, Benye Weber, Executive Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen. **ALTERNATES:** Kim Bredensteiner for Weber; Rex Porter for Toft. **ABSENT:** Ian Jefferds, Jeff Tate,

VISITORS: Kim Bredensteiner, Coupeville, Island County Salmon Recovery Program; Rick Stratton, Oak Harbor, publisher, Northwest Dive News.

CALL TO ORDER: 4:00 pm. Kind called the meeting to order. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted, with the addition of a report by Stratton under Unfinished Business. **MINUTES** of 3-15-2006: Adopted, motion by Bronson, second by Urstad, no objections. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Meehan mentioned the letter from board member Rolf Seitle discussing the **Keystone terminal project**, to be discussed later in this meeting. Pedersen brought up an e-mail from the state on **Geographic Response Plans**, and Wood mentioned an invitation to a **Deception Pass State Park open house** on April 20, received from Jack Hartt, ranger. The Deception Pass open house will provide an opportunity to discuss future restoration plans for the park. Kind suggested the geographic response plan letter be discussed at next week's Executive Committee meeting.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Keystone Ferry project discussion. At the MRC's April 19 meeting in Freeland, the group will discuss the Keystone Ferry terminal alternatives in an effort to develop some recommendations for Washington State Ferries. Rick Stratton will return to participate in this discussion. Meehan will invite Terry Doran of state parks and Kind will invite Keith Becker of Whidbey Audubon. Meehan also will invite Mary Jo Adams.

Motion -- shoreline signage graphic designer. Motion by Campbell, second by Urstad, passed unanimously, to approve the selection of Kris Wiltse as graphic designer and artist for our shoreline signage pilot project.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Progress on filling MRC vacancies. Meehan said he is not aware that anyone has submitted a letter of interest to the county commissioners, though he believes Johnny Palka is in the process because he provided some assistance. Kind said Palka has been extremely busy with the Whidbey Institute Lyceum series just getting under way now, of which he is the organizer. She will follow-up with him.

Keystone Ferry terminal project. Wood introduced Rick Stratton, who has dived extensively at Keystone Jetty. Stratton is a Navy reservist and Prowler pilot, who publishes *Northwest Dive News* and recently returned from a deployment to Kuwait. Stratton said he started diving as a teenager, later moving to the Northwest and discovering the diving here is just fabulous. He founded *Northwest Dive News*, and last year started *Northeast Dive News*, which serves Nova Scotia to North Carolina, and more recently started a Great Lakes edition. Stratton said that like many other divers, he is passionate about the environment because he sees either the abundance or the lack of life in marine waters and how things

interrelate. He said Keystone Jetty is more than a physical asset to Island County; it's an economic asset. He has calculated that 4,000 – 5,000 divers a year travel to Keystone from as far away as Montana. They do it for several reasons – the jetty, clear waters, ample parking, boat ramp, restrooms and showers. Stratton said he estimates each diver spends \$100 to \$200 a day in the local economy for food, lodging and other needs, representing \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 a year of economic benefit.

He said moving the dive site would be catastrophic to divers. One of the other alternatives is to do nothing, which he said “is not a bad alternative to divers – the site is already there.” What divers do not want is to lose the resource. The reef can be rebuilt and things will grow on it, but it will be devastating for a number of years.

Wood commented the WSF speakers at our Freeland meeting had indicated not much grows on the bottom between the old pilings and the jetty. Stratton said a lot grows there – it is rocky reef habitat used as a nesting area by ling cod, for example. Ling cod don't nest in the big boulders of the jetty – they nest in the smaller reefs.

Stratton said if the jetty does get moved, it might be possible to somewhat reduce the damage if the boulders were moved carefully, but in general the diversity of life would be severely reduced. Divers would still come, but there just wouldn't be much to see for a few years. Eventually the jetty would recolonize, but there would be an economic impact to our community.

Stratton said the dive site at the existing jetty actually extends around the end to the inside. But this presents a safety issue because the extremely strong current wants to carry them into the path of the ferry. Once divers get around the end, they have to pull themselves back hand-over-hand; they can't swim against the current. Divers who surface get carried right across the harbor entrance. Stratton said divers are in the process of mapping the area with the intention of posting a sign to increase diver safety.

Kind suggested we dedicate our April 19 meeting to the Keystone project. We have until April 28 to comment to WSF. Meehan suggested we convene a small forum of Rick Stratton; Terry Doran of state parks, and Keith Becker of Whidbey Audubon, to help us discuss and develop some thoughts to send to WSF about their proposed alternatives. He suggested Mary Jo Adams be invited as a member of the audience, since she has great interest in what happens there.

MRC PROJECT REPORTS

Shore Stewards. Meehan reported we just received our Direct Implementation Fund contract, which will help fund the continuation of Scott Chase's position.

Water's Edge book. Pedersen said the review process is just ending. Very helpful comments were received from the reviewers. He and Sarah Schmidt will go through the comments, clean up the manuscript and turn the project over to graphic designer, Stacey Neumiller, to lay it out in publishing software with all the photographs and maps. Meehan said the book's sponsors currently include Public Works, Whidbey in Motion, the Northwest Straits Commission, Island County Parks Department and Windermere Real Estate. He said he is also talking with Les Schwab. As additional sponsors, Kind suggested Nichols Brothers, Pedersen suggested Goosefoot, Toft suggested Island Title, Seitle suggested the port districts, Wood suggested the Marine Conservation Foundation and Sea Grant, and Pedersen also suggested Puget Sound Action Team. Meehan pointed out that the more sponsors we can find, the more we can free up NWSC grant money for other projects.

Shoreline signage. Pedersen reported we have chosen an artist-and-designer for our signage, Kris Wiltse of south Whidbey, who has strong credentials. He has met with her and begun orienting her to the project. Pedersen said he started with a list of about 8 or 10 graphic designers and pared it down to the three who appeared to be the strongest candidates for this type of project. He then talked with them, reviewed their portfolios and solicited proposals. During this process one of the candidates, Stacey Neumiller of WSU

Extension, withdrew because of other work commitments. Pedersen relied on Neumiller as a consultant to help evaluate the proposals of the remaining two candidates. He also discussed the candidates at length with Meehan. Meehan said the executive committee approved Pedersen's choice by e-mail but he would like a motion from the full MRC to concur with it. **Motion by Campbell, second by Urstad to accept Pedersen's recommendation, passed unanimously.**

Water quality. Hillers said he had met with Bredensteiner and Rex Porter, who gave him leads on where to look for water quality data collected to date, but he has not yet started. Meehan said the Coast Guard now has all the proper documents to approve our buoy and he is waiting to hear from them.

Estuary seining. Urstad said the seining is going well. They're getting a lot of fish, and next year they will add Ala Spit to the site list. Meehan said last year Beach Watchers worked with NOAA on Harrington's Lagoon and Elger Bay. This year they're doing Harrington's, Elger and Race. Kind asked when the data could be presented to the MRC. Bredensteiner said the data summaries have not yet been received from NOAA. Meehan said we've seen data in preliminary meetings, but Eric Beamer of Skagit River Systems Cooperative needs to compile the complete picture.

Data mapping. Kind says nothing has been done. She plans to suggest to the executive committee that we assemble our panel of experts to look at the data and identify gaps, and then perhaps hire a contractor to start compiling it. Kind said she received an inquiry from a possible candidate for this work who is new to the area, who has appropriate educational background, has worked in a variety of marine biology roles and appears to be experienced with the necessary software. But before entering into any such arrangement, Kind suggested Bredensteiner might interview the person and determine whether they have the right qualifications.

Bluff birds. Kind said an organizational meeting is scheduled May 4 to resume this project.

Creosote removal. Bredensteiner said Lisa Kaufman of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) currently is in the process of permitting the Keystone Spit project, which will focus on removal of debris from the park eastward. Kind commented DNR also has \$2 million to use primarily for the removal of pilings. Bredensteiner said they are looking for areas that have concentrations so they can achieve efficiency. Many of the pilings Jim Johannessen identified in our feeder bluff survey probably would not be attractive to the DNR unless they were located close to another area where the DNR was working.

NEW BUSINESS

Deception Pass State Park. Meehan reported on a meeting with Jack Hartt at Deception Pass State Park to talk about potential restoration projects. Also attending were Wood, Bredensteiner and Kind. One of the possibilities identified in Johannessen's survey was removal of a creosoted wall by the dock at Cornet Bay. In addition to Cornet Bay, the group also looked at Bowman's Bay and Rosario. This then led to an invitation to an April 20 meeting at the Walla Walla Community College marine center at Rosario. Meehan said the intertidal area at Rosario is so heavily trafficked by people that state parks has been unable to repair the damage. They would like to restrict activity in the high-impact zone, perhaps by designating a path or an elevated path. We have a great deal of data about Rosario. Meehan suggests this might be an opportunity to partner financially with Skagit MRC and the Northwest Straits Foundation.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair

NWSC Director. Kind said the NWSC received 15 applications for Tom Cowan's position. They hope to identify three finalists for the full commission to interview by April 28, and hope to make some decision at that meeting.

Whatcom MRC letter to community leaders. Kind shared a letter Whatcom MRC had sent to community leaders, outlining specific actions that should be taken for the well-being of the marine resource. She said it's a model we should emulate. We are an advisory committee. This is what we should be doing.

Skagit MRC Report to the Community. Kind also shared a copy of Skagit MRC's Report to the Community, which was based closely on our own Five-Year Report.

Executive Director's Written Report – distributed earlier by e-mail.

Financial Update

Following current billings to Ecology, the grant project balances are:

GRANT BUDGET STATUS	Total Budgeted	Total Expended	Balance Remaining
Administration:	18,719.53	15,464.54	3,254.99
MRC Contractors:	24,000.00	14,275.00	9,725.00
Shore Stewards: Stewardship Area/Waters Edge:	16,370.00	3,727.47	12,642.53
	15,910.47	7,783.41	8,127.06
Interpretive Signage:	15,000.00	-	15,000.00
WQ Monitoring/Fish:	12,500.00	5,146.83	7,353.17
Mapping:	10,000.00	-	10,000.00
TOTALS:	\$112,500.00	46,397.25	66,102.75

The signage and data mapping projects have been reported to extend into 2007 in our semi-annual report. All FY04 funds that had to be spent by 6/06 have been expended and billed for.

MRC Leads & Staff Meeting

Last Wednesday all seven MRC counties met at Padilla Bay, at the seventh annual Leads/Chairs & Staff meeting. The group discussed a list of topics that included Politics and the MRC, Beach Watcher coordination, Member issues, Motivating MRC members/Capacity issues, Member turnover/Use of Alternates, Staffing of MRCs and Building MRC projects.

Issues relevant to Island County included:

Beach Watcher coordination

Skagit has a few MRC members now trained as Beach Watchers. Clallam has its first class of 18 graduates. Phyllis warned those in counties just starting the program to treat these volunteers as independent rather than a resource to be "used."

MRC Member Issues

Regarding turnover, the overall sense was that member turnover can be healthy. A member recognition program might be good, but only based on years of service rather than project accomplishments. Jefferson recently held a retreat at which partners were participants, and felt that the input helped bring ideas to the table.

Northwest Straits Foundation

Joan Drinkwin was hired as a contractor for the foundation in January. MRCs were invited to discuss how they thought the foundation could help them, and bring forward any project ideas.

FY06 Grant

The new \$92,000 grant application is underway and will be circulated for review.

NFWF Full Proposal

A full proposal for \$222,000+ in restoration funding was submitted on-line on March 27, 2006. Results will be announced June 15th. On March 22, Meehan, Kind, Wood and Bredensteiner met with Deception Pass Park Director Jack Hartt to inspect potential restoration sites at Cornet Bay and Bowman Bay. We have been invited to an April meeting re the Park's future planning issues.

Gary Wood, Executive Director

DISCUSSION

Restoration opportunities on south Whidbey. Bredensteiner led a discussion of potential restoration opportunities on south Whidbey Island, identified by Jim Johannessen during his feeder bluff survey. Of special note: Reconnect Greenbank Marsh (site 32). There might be an opportunity for a conversation among the homeowners association, Greenbank Farm, the port, the MRC and the county for a project to reintroduce tidal exchange and restore a coastal lagoon. Some time ago the homeowners association was working on repairing a tide gate here. Langley Marina. This was not on Johannessen's list but the Port of South Whidbey is interested in removing a large number of pilings remaining from the pier of the old Langley Marina. This is on DNR tidelands and would appear to be a prime candidate for their creosote removal project, since it involves a significant amount of material in one location that could be easily accessed from the water. Bredensteiner, Kind, Meehan and Wood strongly encouraged Seitle to talk to Lisa Kauffman of the DNR about this site. Mouth of Deer Creek (#52). This property on Columbia Beach had a small cabin on it in 2001 when the photograph was taken, but it now has a year-round home and it seems less likely the owners would favor a project. Potential exists for some kind of project, but acquisition of the land probably is less likely than before. Mouth of Glendale Creek (#58). Glendale is a true salmon creek. The county once had an IAC grant to purchase the property and open the mouth of the creek, which passes underneath the homeowner's property, but the homeowner decided against it. Bredensteiner said this is worth keeping an eye on in case the homeowner reconsiders at some future time.

Camano restoration opportunities. Bredensteiner will lead a discussion of Camano Island restoration opportunities at the May 3 meeting in Oak Harbor.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Kind declared the meeting adjourned at 6:12 pm.

Coming Events

- Apr. 19** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.
Discussion: WSF Keystone Ferry Terminal project options.
- Apr. 20** Deception Pass State Park open house meeting with Jack Hartt.
- May 3** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.
Speaker: Tom Cowan, NWSC. Discussion: Camano Island restoration opportunities.
- May 17** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland
- June 7** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor
- June 21** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland